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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR SA

SUBJECT: SAG SAYS STOP IRAN FROM GETTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS
THEN NO NEED FOR MORE DISCUSSIONS

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission David Rundell for reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During his late October 2007 visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staffer Bradley Bowman met with MFA's HRH Prince Turki bin Faisal, Head of the Political Affairs section on October 28. The discussion focused on Iranian nuclear issues. During the meeting, Prince Turki emphatically assured Bowman that Saudi Arabia actively supports the Middle East as a "free zone of weapons of mass destruction." The Prince also noted that though the SAG supports any nation's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear energy program, members of the SAG strongly oppose Iranian possession of nuclear weapons. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) During his visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staffer Bradley Bowman met with MFA's Prince Turki bin Faisal, Head of the Political Affairs section. The discussion focused on Iran's nuclear program and Prince Turki expressed his concerns regarding two primary issues: (1) What Iran is doing with their nuclear program and what can be done about it; and (2) If an attack on Iran was the only remaining course of action to stop their nuclear weapon development, how would Saudi Arabia respond?

¶3. (C) Prince Turki opened the discussion with a pledge that Saudi Arabia's primary interest is to promote the Middle East as a "free zone of weapons of mass destruction." He acknowledged that Israel's tacit possession of nuclear weapons lent credibility to Iran's alleged efforts to obtain nuclear arms, but noted that the ramifications of Iran becoming a nuclear power would far outweigh the regional security benefits. Specifically, Prince Turki highlighted the wide-spread environmental damage that could occur throughout the region if there was a leak in any one of Iran's nuclear reactors. He noted that if a leak occurred, the water supply for the entire Gulf would be contaminated. Environmental concerns aside, Prince Turki also emphasized the inevitable arms race that would follow; if Iran possessed nuclear weapons, other countries in the region, including Turkey and Egypt, would likely accelerate their efforts to secure similar capabilities. Prince Turki also assured Bowman that despite the nuclear status of any of its neighbors, Saudi Arabia has no interest in or plan to become a nuclear power.

¶4. (C) Turning his focus to leadership in Iran and Iranian motivations for attempting to secure nuclear capabilities, Prince Turki acknowledged the difficulties of understanding true Iranian ambitions, commenting that the present leadership is "confusing." As Iran's nuclear program is long-standing, however, he noted that though Saudi Arabia supports any nation's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear energy program, the Kingdom strongly opposes Iranian possession of nuclear weapons. Prince Turki believed that the effects of the shift of power to Iran could foster

additional instability in the region. To this end, Prince Turki explained that short of war, the SAG will do anything possible to stop Iran from acquiring such weapons. He noted that an attack on Iran would have "catastrophic" results for the U.S. and should be avoided at all costs.

15. (C) As a proposed alternate course of action, Prince Turki emphasized the need for normalization of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iran; he strongly believed that Iran's main intent in becoming a nuclear power was to command attention and respect in the region. Specifically, Prince Turki thought that Iran should be included in discussions about regional issues such as Iraq and Lebanon. Prince Turki noted, "Iran will not use the weapon. Rather, the weapon will be used to make the world include them, to take them into consideration in global decisions." Prince Turki highlighted that with a nuclear weapon in their possession, Iran cannot be ignored. Prince Turki concluded by advising that the U.S. should not waste time thinking about what would happen "if." The U.S. needs to take action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power; Iran must be provided a seat at the proverbial table.

16. (C) COMMENT: Prince Turki's message was one of both support and warning to the U.S. Specifically, Prince Turki clearly stated that though Saudi Arabia has no interest in pursuing a nuclear program, the SAG believes that Iran is refining their nuclear capabilities and could soon possess nuclear weapons. He was also clearly focused on expressing his beliefs on the ulterior motives of the leaders in Iran. That said, it was apparent that Prince Turki believes that Iran poses no threat to the U.S., Israel and other countries in the region. Nevertheless, the SAG believes the U.S. must act to prevent Iran from using their nuclear resources for

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anything other than peaceful means. According to Prince Turki, the best way to soothe Iran is to invite them to participate in discussions about regional issues such as the war in Iraq and the situation in Lebanon. The SAG believes that this simple course of action will likely prevent Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons and will possibly end the need for additional discussions on the issue. END COMMENT

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